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## North Penn's Nees wins gold at Eastern Nationals

By KEV HUNTER

Staff Writer

To get an idea of how good a diver Zac Nees is, his coach, Todd Michael, will fill you in pretty quickly.

"He is in his own realm," Michael said of the North Penn senior. "There are elite divers, and then there are people like him."

Nees' recent performance backs up that statement.

The Knights' top diver won the gold medal in the one-meter event at the Eastern National Championships down in Tennessee, putting forth his best performance of his young career in the biggest meet of his career.

"It was close for a while, but after his reverse two-and-a-half, it was game over," Michael said. "Nobody was gonna catch him."

Nees, a member of Michael's Liberty diving squad, won the USA Diving competition by 20 points, not only taking home the gold, but it was also a successful audition. The Indiana University coaching staff was so impressed with Nees, they invited him out this weekend for a visit.

Michael is now enjoying giving people a dose of 'I told you so.'

"I wish everybody would have believed me last year when I told them what this kid was capable of," he said.

Nees started diving for Michael a year and a half ago, and his progress has been huge.

"From where he was last year to this year, it is unreal," Michael said. "He is an elite athlete, and he is definitely a pressure kid. There's not a lot of kids out there like that. Some of them will fold when the pressure is on."

Nees was simply in a zone at the Eastern Nationals. Asked what he did best, Michael said "everything — he dove exceptionally well. He hit everything. When it came to the big dives, he just unloaded."

The competition accounted for 28 of the 50 states, and when you factor in the scores from the western meet, Nees would have finished second in the country. Nees got a bid to the eastern meet by virtue of his performance at the Region 3 Championships down in Virginia.

Nees, The Reporter's Athlete of the Year for Boys Swimming and Diving, was coming off a high school season in which he placed second at states, finishing off a stellar career under the guidance of diving coach Sue McDonald.

Michael expects Nees to excel at the next level. Even the "O" word came into

the conversation.

"If he really set his mind to it, I think he could train to make the 2012 Olympics on the springboard. It would mean lots and lots of training, but he is exceptional," Michael said. "I would say, as a freshman, he should make it to NCAA's."



ZAC NEES

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